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ABSTRACT

The theoretical basis for the present study is the proposition that reactions to minority group members by white individuals are related to belief similarity rather than racial similarity. Ninth grade subjects were tested on two occasions with a questionnaire composed of a value scale, an information section, a friendliness scale, and a similarity scale. The results of the study indicate that the subjects respond primarily in terms of belief and secondarily in terms of race. Although similar studies exist for other minority groups, a meaningful comparison of prejudice toward different ethnic groups requires a study designed specifically for that purpose. (Author/LAA)

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REPORTED FRIENDLINESS TOWARD MEXICAN-AMERICANS AS A FUNCTION OF BELIEF SIMILARITY AND RACE[1]

Steven G. Cole and Kathleen Davenport

The theoretical basis for the present study was the proposal that reactions to minority group members by white individuals are related to belief similarity rather than racial similarity (Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960). The importance of belief congruence as a determinant of reported friendliness toward Mexican-Americans was examined by replicating the design of a study by Stein, Hardyck, and Smith (1965) while substituting Mexican-American stimuli for the Negro stimuli used in that study. Based on previous studies (Byrne & Wong, 1962; Rokeach, 1961; Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960; Stein, 1966; Stein et al., 1965; Triandis & Davis, 1965), the authors predicted that friendship choice would be primarily a function of belief and secondarily a function of race. It was also expected that racial effects would be directly related to intimacy of behavior.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 43 ninth grade students (20 males and 23 females) from a junior high school history class in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The school was located in an all white upper middle class neighborhood. There were no Black students in the school, and less than two percent of the school population was Mexican-American.

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Procedure. The subjects were tested in two regular classroom periods lasting 40 minutes. At the first session, the subjects were given a questionnaire composed of the following: (a) a value scale which contained statements about beliefs. Subjects were asked to rate each item on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly feel I should" to "strongly feel I shouldn't." (b) an information section in which the subjects were asked their sex, grade in school, program studied in school, grades made last year, and race; and (c) a friendliness scale which contained a list of 16 persons designated by occupation, race or status (e.g., typist, Mexican-American teenager). The subjects were asked to indicate how friendly they would feel toward that person on a five-point scale ranging from "quite friendly" to "quite unfriendly."

The responses from the questionnaires administered in the first session were used to create the stimuli for the second testing session which was held five weeks later. The stimuli for the second session were put in booklet form. Each booklet included four stimulus teenagers; each with a similarity scale on which the subjects were asked to respond to the question, "How much like you would you say Teenager X is?" on a six-point scale ranging from "as much like me as any teenager I can think of" to "as much unlike me as any teenager I can think of." A

friendliness scale on which subjects were asked to respond to the question, "If you met this teenager for the first time, what would your reaction be?" on a five-point scale ranging from "quite friendly" to "quite unfriendly." A social distance scale for teenagers used by Stein et al. (1965) and information questions.

The four stimulus teenagers were defined by fabricated value scales which were purportedly filled out by four teenagers in other parts of the country. Two stimulus teenagers were created who had beliefs like the subject, and two stimulus teenagers were created who had beliefs unlike the subject. The two "like" and the two "unlike" stimuli were created according to the pattern designed by Stein et al. (1965). The stimulus teenager combinations created by this procedure were referred to as follows: "Anglo-like," "Anglo-unlike," and "Mexican-American-like" and "Mexican-American-unlike."

Results

At the second testing session, five subjects were absent, two subjects were Mexican-American, and one subject failed to complete all of the questionnaire. One subject failed to complete the impressions scale. Thus, data were analyzed from the questionnaires of 35 subjects (17 males and 18 females) on all

scales except the impressions scale. On this scale, 17 males and 17 females contributed data.

Similarity scale. As in the Stein et al. (1965) study, the similarity scale was used to check the manipulation of similarity between the subject and the stimulus teenager. Mean responses on the similarity scale for Anglo-like and Anglo-unlike were 1.40 and 2.80 respectively, while the mean responses for Mexican-American-like and Mexican-American-unlike were 1.65 and 3.23 respectively. These means are presented in Table 1. The combined mean scores of both like conditions differ significantly from the combined mean responses in the unlike conditions ($\overline{X}$ like = 3.05, $\overline{X}$ unlike = 6.03, t = 8.8, df = 34, $p<.001$, all t's reported in the present paper are two tailed). Thus, the manipulation of similarity and dissimilarity was considered successful.

Insert Table 1 about here

Friendliness scale. The data from the friendliness scale scores indicated support for the prediction that reported friendliness toward Mexican-Americans would be primarily a function of belief and secondarily a function of race. Mean responses to the friendliness scale completed during the second

testing session are reported in Table 1. Results of an analysis of variance on the responses to the friendliness scale using a 2 x 2 factorial design with repeated measures on both factors indicated a significant main effect for belief ($F = 33.84$, $p<.001$); however, there was no significant effect for race.

To further test the effect of race and belief, the responses to the Mexican-American teenager stimulus on the friendliness scale administered during the first testing session were compared to the responses to the like and unlike Mexican-American teenagers on the friendliness scale completed during the second testing session. Results similar to those obtained by Stein et al. (1965) were found for the responses to the friendliness scale as a function of race and belief. A mean of 1.12 for the Mexican-American teenager fell almost halfway between the mean response toward the Mexican-American-like teenager (.74) and the mean response toward the Mexican-American-unlike teenager (1.53). The subjects felt significantly more friendly toward the Mexican-American-like teenager than toward the Mexican-American-unlike teenager ($t = 4.65$, $p<.05$); however, there was no significant difference between the friendliness felt toward Mexican-American teenagers and the Mexican-American-like teenager ($t = 2.03$, $.05<p<.10$).

Social distance scale. A 2 x 2 analysis of variance design with repeated measures on both factors computed on the total social distance scale scores indicated that the willingness to associate with Mexican-Americans was a function of both race and belief ($F = 5.37$, $p < .05$ and $F = 31.56$, $p < .001$ for race and belief respectively).

To further examine the effect of race and belief on the willingness to associate with Mexican-Americans, t tests for both race and belief were computed on each of the ten items on the social distance scale. The responses to the two Mexican-American stimuli collapsed across belief were compared to the responses to the two Anglo stimuli collapsed across belief and the responses to the two like stimuli collapsed across race were compared to the responses to the two unlike stimuli collapsed across race. The t tests are reported in Table 2. There was a significant propensity to prefer an association with individuals who had similar beliefs regardless of race on all but two of the ten items; (a) "go to a party to which this person was invited," and (b) "go to the same school." On the other hand, only one item indicated a significant preference as a function of race. There was a propensity for the subjects to prefer Anglos as close personal friends regardless of their

beliefs. Thus, it was concluded that the prediction that a friendliness toward Mexican-Americans would be primarily a function of belief and secondarily a function of race was supported by the responses on the social distance scale. However, the prediction that racial effects would increase as a function of intimate behaviors was only minimally supported.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

Although friendliness is only one of the variables associated with prejudice, the results of the present study were consistent with the Rokeach et al. (1960) theory that prejudice is primarily a function of belief dissimilarity. Significant belief effects were indicated on all of the scales. On the other hand, significant racial effects were found only on the social distance scale. Hence, it was concluded that the subjects responded primarily in terms of belief and secondarily in terms of race.

Race was a significant factor in both the present study and the Stein et al. (1965) study. A comparison of the two studies indicates that prejudice toward Negroes may be more closely associated with race than prejudice toward Mexican-

Americans. Racial effects were found in the present study only on one intimate item of the social distance scale, "close personal friend;" whereas Stein et al. found significant racial effects on three intimate items, (a) "live in the same apartment house," (b) "date my brother (sister)," and (c) "invite home to dinner." Moreover, while both the Stein et al. study and the present study found a tendency to devalue a person as a function of racial cues when belief information was not available, those data were not significant in the present study.

It is obvious that meaningful comparison of prejudice toward different ethnic groups requires a study designed for that purpose. However, the comparison of the present study with the Stein et al. study should be useful for developing hypotheses. For example, it would seem important for subsequent research to consider the similarities of friendship choice across ethnic groups as reported by the two studies. In addition, even though friendship choice does not encompass all of the variables involved in prejudice, the present study adds to the studies that have supported the theory that belief congruence is a major factor in prejudice.

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Table 1

Mean Response to Stimulus Teenagers (N = 35)

	Stimulus Teenager			
	Anglo like	Anglo unlike	Mexican-American like	Mexican-American unlike
1. How much like you?[a]	1.40	2.80	1.65	3.23
2. How friendly?[a]	.59	1.47	.71	1.59
3. Social Distance Scale total score[b]	8.54	6.37	7.80	5.40
4. Individual items of the Social Distance Scores[c]				
Invite home to dinner	.58	.31	.56	.14
Go to a party to which this person was invited	.94	.83	.92	.86
Go to the same school	1.00	1.00	1.00	.94
[illegible] member of social group	.92	.43	.80	.37
[illegible] the same apartment house with	.92	.75	.86	.66
[illegible] to in class	.94	.75	.92	.71
[illegible] at school with	.86	.56	.78	.46
Close personal friend	.75	.31	.53	.26
Work on committee with	.97	.81	.86	.77
Date my sister (brother)	.58	.44	.64	.26

[a]For these questions, a low score signifies greater friendliness and perceived similarity, respectively.

[b]Scoring: 1 for "yes," 0 for "no;" 10 points possible.

[c]Scores run from 0 to 1. A mean of 1.0 signifies endorsement of the item by everyone.

Table 2

Social Distance Scale Item Comparisons with Respect to Belief and Race

(N = 35)

Items on the Social Distance Scale	t for belief[a]	t for race[b]
Invite home to dinner	5.95***	1.63
Go to a party to which this person was invited	1.20	1.00
Go to the same school	1.00	1.00
Have as a member of my social group	6.27***	1.36
Live in same apartment house	3.50***	1.81
Eat lunch at school with	5.23***	1.88
Sit next to in class	5.08***	1.14
Close personal friend	5.16***	2.13*
Work on committee with	2.46**	1.00
Date my sister (brother)	5.08***	.83

[a]Based on the difference in mean response to like and unlike stimulus teenagers, regardless of race: (Anglo-like + Mexican-American-like) - (Anglo-unlike + Mexican-unlike).

[b]Based on the difference in mean response to Anglo and Mexican-American stimulus teenagers, regardless of whether like or unlike: (Anglo-like + Anglo-unlike) - (Mexican-American-like + Mexican-American-unlike).

*p .05
**p .02
***p .001

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